



# NATIONAL HEALTH INTERVIEW SURVEY

## WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

Health policy makers, public health program managers, researchers, educators, the media, and the public need timely population health data to guide their decision making.

## WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC's National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is a major source of information on the health status of the nation, collected through confidential household interviews with more than 100,000 persons each year. NHIS interviewers collect information on topics such as health status and disability, insurance coverage, access to care, use of health services, immunizations, health behaviors, injury, and ability to perform daily activities. Additional topics addressed in 2002 include alternative medicine, arthritis, disability and secondary conditions, environmental health, vision and hearing. The data are used by health agencies and organizations, government agencies, academic institutions, and individual citizens to plan and monitor health policies and programs.

The production cycle of the NHIS has shortened substantially. In 2001, the Early Release Program began to publish NHIS estimates of selected key health measures on the Internet. Selected data estimates are based on full or partial year data and released quarterly in March, June, September, and December. The NHIS also collects supplemental data on specific topics. In 2002 the supplements to the survey collected information for Healthy People 2010, Complementary and Alternative Medicine, and children's mental health. In 2003, Healthy People 2010 and children's mental health will be addressed.

*Examples of program in action:* NHIS data are used widely to characterize persons' health status and access to health care. In 2001, Health insurance coverage has increased. The percent of Americans without health insurance fell from 15.4 percent in 1997 to 14.1 percent in 2001. Persons with health insurance are more likely to have access to care, such as a regular source of care, which is key to receiving preventive services and timely treatment of illness and injury. NHIS data showed an increasing number of American children have health insurance coverage. The percent of children without insurance fell from 13.9 percent in 1977 to 10.8 percent in 2001.

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Increase the value of data to users by identifying the sample for household surveys for the period 2005-2014 to reflect changing demographics, and redesign the sample to allow for greater racial/ethnic detail.
- Improve the timeliness of data for users. The NHIS will overhaul the basis systems through which data are collected, processed, and made available to users. This process includes conversion to an advanced computer assisted personal interview system and use of relational databases.

*For more information on this and other CDC programs, visit [www.cdc.gov/programs](http://www.cdc.gov/programs).*

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